



The Basin of Latona, Versailles.

Europe Through Canadian Eyes-VI.

Readers of the last article in this series may have wondered that no reference was made to the lifting up of the heart from nature to nature's God as the glories of the Alps were being viewed. The simple truth is that such uplifting of thought which might seem to be inevitable did not take place in the experience of the writer, nor, so far as could be learned or observed, in the minds of many of the party. Whether we had been surfeited with things religious during our eight days' stay in Zurich, or whether it was that we never had time to get into the restful attitude so essential to quiet meditation, certain it is that those shining peaks, whose tops plainly point heavenward, failed for the time to have the effect that might be expected on our spirits. We think, however, of the cogitations they ought to have suggested, as in memory we recall their appearance. It was otherwise with the sea. Once out of sight of land and of other vessels, its vastness, its loneliness, its hidden dangers and mysterious power possessed the soul, and made us think of Him in the hollow of whose hand it lies.

What the Alps at the time failed to do was brought about also by the sight of a plain, old building in Geneva. A tablet on the outside informs the passing tourist that here John Calvin taught his students and preached from A. D. 1536 to 1564, and that for two years, 1556-59, John Knox preached here also. A Presbyterian may be pardoned for feeling moved at sight of a place which so vividly recalls those two stalwarts, who were the principal founders of the polity and doctrine of his church. We stumbled on this old church almost by accident. We, that is a party of us, had searched for and found the ancient cathedral of the town, St. Peter's, first built in the tenth century on the site of a pagan temple that surmounted a hill in the city. And here, only a few yards from it and on the same area, was a plain structure, whose associations dwarfed those of the other into insignificance.

Whatever may be thought of Calvin or of the doctrine which bears his name, and opinions on these points differ as wide as the poles, no one questions the keenness and strength of his intellect or the energy and resolution of his character. He was buried in the common graveyard of Geneva, but, by his own expressed wish, no stone was erected to mark the place, and the exact spot has long been unknown. J. A. Froude, the historian, says of Calvin, "for hard times, hard men are needed, and intellects which can pierce to the roots where truth and lies part company." John Morley, in his "Oliver Cromwell," has this to say of his doctrine, "It is a theory that might have been expected to sink men crouching and paralysed into the blackest abysses of despair, and it has, in fact, been answerable for much anguish in many a human heart. Still, Calvinism has proved itself a famous soil for rearing heroic nature. Founded on St. Paul and on Augustine. . . . Calvinism exalted its votaries to a pitch of heroic moral energy that has never been surpassed." And Calvin was a Frenchman. That fact is sufficient answer to those who are inclined to think of the French as flippant and somewhat deficient in rugged strength. They are different, it is true, from those of the Teutonic

or Celtic races. As we came down through Holland, Germany, and into Switzerland, we had met scarcely any who might not have been claimed as cousins, so much were they like ourselves. But when we struck Geneva, which is largely French, we met people of another race. Of darker complexion, more aquiline features, and, no doubt, of a different cast of mind, we felt for the first time on our tour as if among strangers. But we soon became acquainted. Very much so indeed. As a people they are most approachable and suave. We like the French. We love them, to tell the truth. We were not favorably impressed with Paris, to which place we proceeded from Geneva. The ideals of that city, as expressed in many of the public buildings, are, in our judgment, unworthy of a great people. This feeling was accentuated upon visiting the palace of Versailles, twelve miles out. Here Louis XIV. had exhausted ingenuity in devising a palace and grounds surrounding it on a scale so vast and an expenditure so lavish as to make it a wonder to this day. One ornamental pool after another the visitor comes upon, each adorned with stone figures, grotesque or beautiful,—sometimes both—and with facilities for spouting fountain jets without number. These fountains once played incessantly, and, of course, at immense cost. Now, a few of them only, and these in succession and for a short time at stated hours, are active.

In sauntering along the driveways through the vast planted forest of Versailles one comes across

pools such as described every quarter mile or so. Each forms usually a centre from which radiate six or eight avenues, the trees bordering which shoot straight up to a height often reaching eighty feet. At short intervals along the principal driveways marble statues are placed. Inside the palace, room after room glows with elaborate decorations heavily gilded. And all to what end? Merely, as our local guide told us, for the glorification of Louis XIV. Almost every room, except the long display halls which are semi-public, is garnished with pictures or statues or bas-reliefs of that monarch in various attitudes. Our guide, remarking upon the thousands of men and horses that were employed in excavating and building work while the palace and its outside embellishments were under construction, said that all the remuneration these French workmen received was their food. They were working for the grand monarch, and that was pay enough. The food, said he, supplied them for one day was a plate of soup, a loaf of bread and an onion. Think of the millions of money lavished without stint upon that tawdry palace, and of the poor peasantry from which that money was wrung. No wonder there was a revolution.

In Paris the same misdirection of funds for the glory of a mere man, an unworthy one at that, is seen at the tomb of Napoleon. For rich and glowing architectural design and effects that tomb and the Hotel des Invalides—the building surrounding it—surpass anything we have been privileged to look upon. And all in honor of a man, who, according to British estimate at least, genius though he might be, wasted the French nation, caring for nothing and no one but himself.

France has, by expatriation, in past centuries greatly enriched England, Holland, and the United States, to her own immense loss. From time to time she has sent out from herself of her choicest families who took with them the arts acquired during centuries. This whole sad matter has been the misfortune rather than the fault of her common people. Not infrequently those in authority have been injudicious, sometimes worse. France is in more favored circumstances now in this regard. Her presidents have been usually strong and wise, M. Poincaré, the present chief officer, being an eminent instance of this. Nobly has France been retrieving herself of late, and recovering her rightful place among the nations. The bitter humbling which she received at the hands of Germany, more than forty years ago, has given the charm of simple modesty to French character, which probably was rather lacking previous to that time. Beneath the outward glitter and glare of Paris and Versailles, which is after all but the froth on the surface, there is a patient people working, working, working. We had exceptional opportunities to form a just estimate of the French character, in addition to those which a mere passing journey would afford. A large number of French passengers were aboard the steamer on which we returned, and we became quite intimate with several of them. And this is how we place them. Their distinguishing features are industry, economy, and contentment. The little French chambermaids in the halls of hotels when nothing else was doing, did not sit or lounge with folded hands, but diligently and unobtrusively knitted. The carters whom we met as we slashed back



The Church of Calvin and Knox.

The seats shown are not the original ones, but are modelled after their design. The pulpit is the identical one from which these intellectual giants taught 350 years ago. The church is now used by a German congregation.